

ITALIAN EMBASSY WHERE THE DUKE D'ABRUZZI WILL STOP WHILE IN AMERICA



BARON MAYOR DES PLANCHES,
the Italian Ambassador to the United States.
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BARONESS MAYOR DES PLANCHES,
Wife of the Italian Ambassador to the United States.
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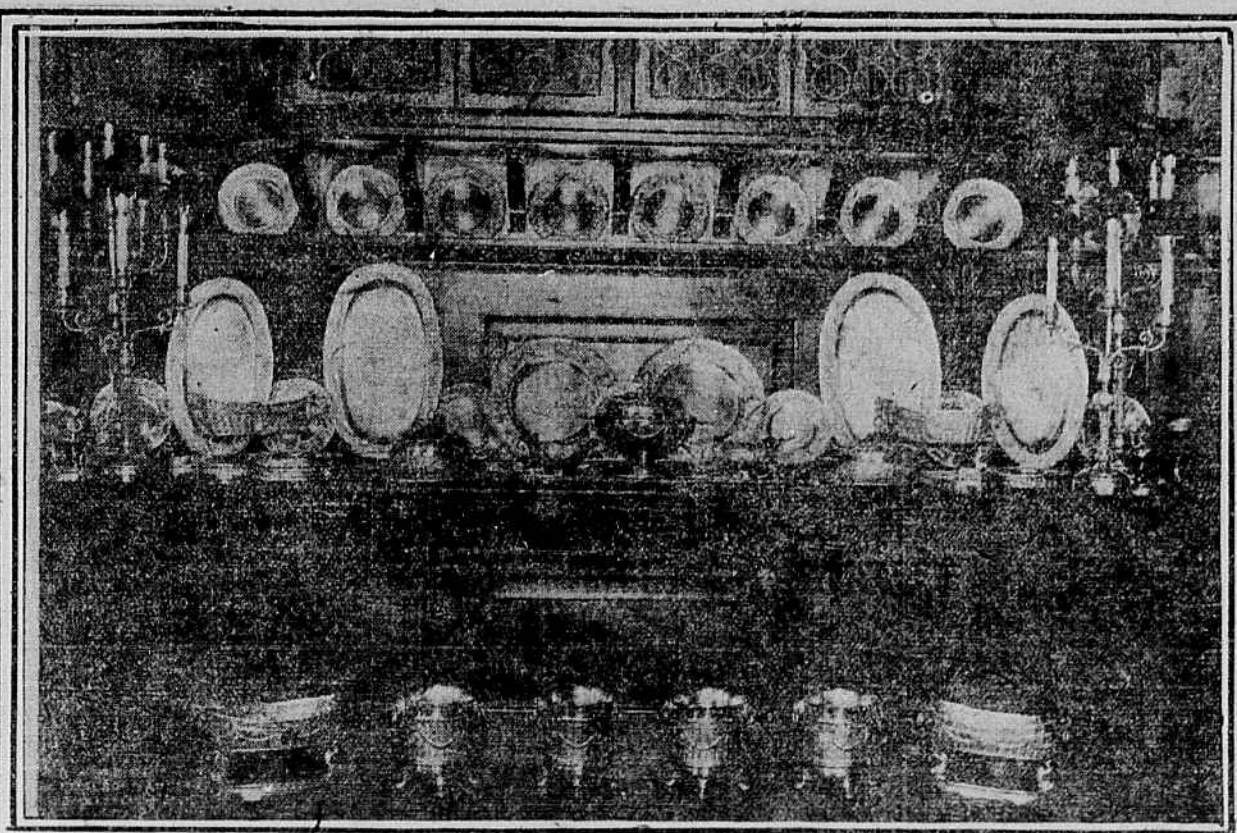
MISS KATHERINE ELKINS,



THE DUKE DE ABRUZZI.



DRAWING ROOMS OF THE ITALIAN EMBASSY, AT WASHINGTON.
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SILVER PLATE AT THE ITALIAN EMBASSY, AT WASHINGTON.
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BY WALDON FAWCETT.

When the Duke d'Abruzzi comes to the United States to marry Miss Katherine Elkins he will make his headquarters at the Italian Embassy at Washington. It would be incompatible with the position and dignity of a member of the royal house of Savoy to seek lodgings like an ordinary transient at a public hotel, and accordingly the Italian ambassador and his suite will be housed at the branch office of the Italian government in America—the ambassadorial residence of the personal representative of the King of Italy.

This is quite in accord with precedent as established in the case of previous royal visitors who have come to our shores from Europe. Thus, it will be remembered, when Prince Henry of Prussia made his ceremonial visit to the United States, on the occasion of Alfred Roper's "entertainment for the Kaiser's yacht," he established himself at the German Embassy at Washington. To be sure, this procedure at our republican court is somewhat in contrast with the conditions which obtain when royalty goes visiting on the other side of the Atlantic.

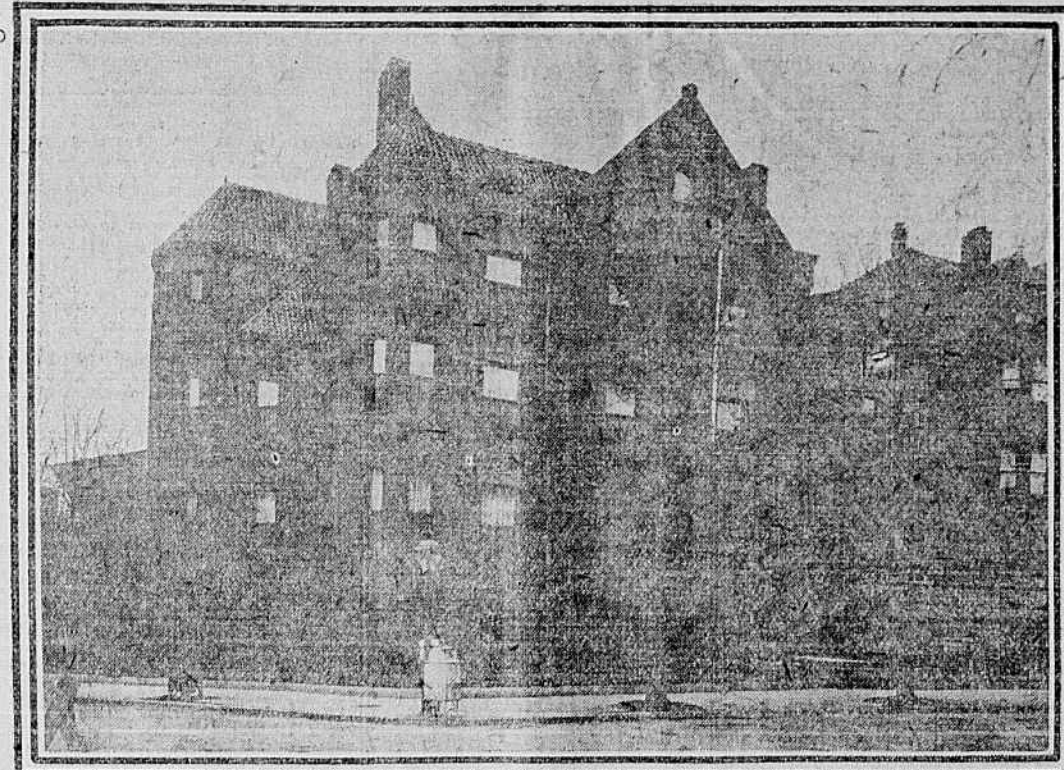
No Government Palaces.

In the Old World, when a member of a reigning family pays a visit of state to a neighbor nation, he almost invariably has placed at his disposal a spacious and sumptuously furnished palace, of which he is master for the time being and which is sufficiently commodious to accommodate his entire suite, no matter how numerous be his retinue. For various reasons this form of hospitality is not readily practicable at the American capital under any circumstances, and in the present instance it would scarcely be proper since the Italian ambassador is not coming to this country as the guest of our government. For all that it is announced that a fleet of warships is to

attend the future admiral of the Italian navy on his return home with his bride, the circumstance does not alter the fact that the Duke is coming in his private capacity and on a personal errand, and such being the case the embassy of his country constitutes the most acceptable headquarters.

If the representative of Italian royalty had come more than a half a dozen years earlier in quest of an American bride he might not have found himself so nicely situated at this happy period, for it was only recently that the Italian government, following the example of Germany, Great Britain and other leading powers, purchased property in Uncle Sam's seat of government and set up a branch of the quirk. Prior to that time the Italian envoy, to the scandal of official Washington, made his home in New York City, only coming to the capital when socially obliged to the White House or when official business necessitated, and not so much as maintaining an office in the city on the Potomac.

Once Owned by Mrs. Hearst.
The present ambassadorial residence was sold to the Italian government by Mrs. Phoebe A. Hearst, widow of William Randolph Hearst—a woman who owned in succession several notable Washington residences, and, who, by odd coincidence, had already disposed of one or two of her homes to foreign governments ere the Italians were added to the list of purchasers. Mrs. Hearst did not build the mansion that she transferred to the authorities at Rome, but during the twelve years that she owned it she made so many alterations and improvements as to amount to reconstruction. The Italian government is understood to have appropriated the sum of \$150,000 to purchase an embassy in America, but it was stated at the time that the price agreed upon for the Hearst property was \$120,000, leaving a balance of \$30,000 to be expended upon repairs and furnishings.



THE ITALIAN EMBASSY, AT WASHINGTON.
(Photograph from Waldon Fawcett, Washington, D. C.)

For all that the Italian Embassy is perhaps not in as close proximity as an ardent suitor might desire to the home of Miss Katherine Elkins, it is nevertheless admirably located with reference to the activities of officialdom at the capital. Situated on the northwest corner of New Hampshire Avenue and O Street, little more than a stone's throw from Dupont Circle, it is as much in the heart of the new fashionable district as is the Elkins residence in the older stronghold of the elect, near the White House.

Likewise is this three-story structure of red brick, with trimmings and portico of brown stone, admirably adapted for use as the embassy of a foreign power. Indeed, in many respects, it is the handsomest embassy at the capital.

Splendid Dining-Room.

At the main entrance a door of oak, studded with iron bolts of massive design, opens upon a vestibule and hallway paved in mosaic and with walls and ceilings of carved oak. The visitor sees through a broad archway a vista of a suite of apartments tastefully planned for large entertainments. There are two connecting drawing-rooms with a library beyond and an ample music corner. The drawing-rooms are furnished throughout in light tones, the delicately tinted damask wall hangings affording an admirable setting for the white and gold furniture. Aside from the drawing-rooms the principal show places of the mansion comprise the imposing Moorish stairway and the lofty music-room with its heavy beamed ceiling, although the former owner, Mrs. Hearst, took great pride in the dining-room, which she claimed was the most perfect Dutch interior to be found this side of Holland.

And, speaking of the dining-room, the observation may be interjected that if the Duke d'Abruzzi should desire to give a farewell bachelor dinner or any other elaborate entertainment

he will find the domestic arrangements of his temporary home adequate to all demands. In addition to the regular dining-room there is a banquet hall with walls and ceiling of California redwood and floor of white mosaic, and the kitchen, resplendent in white satin drapery, is of correspondingly generous proportions. It has been a boast that an entire stag might be roasted whole in the capacious range. On the score of table appointments the Italian Embassy does not suffer by comparison with the similar possessions of Thomas F. Wall or any of the other dinner givers of Washington. The silver service at Italy's ambassadorial residence is particularly admired, and consists of more than 100 pieces, comprising urns, candelabra, bonbon and fruit dishes, plates, etc., all engraved with a pattern known as the "Mediterranean of Mexico." Pale gold satin lining forms the walls and floors, the latter partially covered with white bearskin rugs.

The Duke d'Abruzzi is particularly fortunate in his host and hostess. Not only are the Italian ambassador and Baroness Mayor des Planches hospitable by instinct, but they take a genuine delight in entertaining. In this the present envoy from Italy is in marked contrast to his predecessor, Baron Fava, who saw twenty years of continuous service as Italy's accredited agent in America, but he and his wife were never active socially and probably no diplomat representing a leading nation had fewer acquaintances. Indeed, it was whispered at the time of the change that Baron des Planches had been selected as Fava's successor partly because of the confidence of the officials at Rome that he would build up Italian prestige by an active social campaign. The Marquis di Malaspina was originally chosen as the successor of Baron Fava, but he preferred a European post and accordingly Baron des Planches, who was at that time serving as Italian Minister to Serbia, was given the post at Washington. Baron des Planches is a man of considerable fortune, and in consequence has been enabled to entertain lavishly in Washington.

Baron Mayor des Planches.
Fitted by experiences as well as temperament to play host to aspirants is Baron Edmondo Mayor des Planches. The son of an Italian land owner of wealth and station, he was born in Turin and was educated at the college of Moncalieri in Piedmont, at the University of Turin and in Heidelberg. When he entered the diplomatic service in 1875 the conservative party was in power with De Pretis as premier, and he appointed young Mayor his secretary of foreign affairs, in which position he remained for two years. Ill health then compelled him to retire from public office for a time, but he was again prominent in the same sphere during Crispien's first premiership, and, indeed, was more or less intimately connected with that statesman during his entire career.

While serving as secretary of foreign

affairs he accompanied Crispien on his historic visits to Berlin, Carlsbad and other points, and thus had opportunity to meet many of the most noted statesmen of Europe, including Bismarck and Count Kalousky. After declining various diplomatic appointments because he did not care to leave Italy, Mayor finally accepted the position of counselor of legation at Bern, Switzerland, and in 1895 he was promoted to the rank of minister and assigned to Belgrade, Serbia. This was followed by his selection for the post of Italian envoy at Washington.

It is suspected that Baron des Planches might not have continued in the position at Washington thus long had there not been the prospect of playing host to the Duke d'Abruzzi. It is known that the distinguished Italian has for some time desired to relinquish his duties here, due principally to the fact that his wife suffers severely from seasickness on the voyages to and from this country.

Wife of Ambassador.
The baron was married in 1881, when he was thirty years of age. His wife, as may be guessed from her maiden name, Maria De Van Chevalier, comes from a French family, and one of the

stories related of her is that she never spoke a word of Italian until after her marriage. The baroness is a tall woman, of distinguished bearing, but democratic manner. Her hair and eyes are brown, and neither she nor her husband have the dark coloring so often distinctive of the Latins. In their devotion to one another the Baron and Baroness des Planches may be said to set an example worthy of emulation by younger lovers. Despite the exigencies of the baron's public duties they have seldom been separated for any length of time. The Italian ambassador is known as one of the most artistically gowned women in Washington, and the baron's raiment, in point of splendor, will not suffer by comparison even with the court dress of the Duke d'Abruzzi. The effect of the baron's brilliant diplomatic uniform is heightened by several bejeweled decorations. He wears the insignia of the crown of Italy, the highest decoration granted by the Italian monarch; that of the Order of Saint Maurizio and Lazzaro; and a number of decorations bestowed by foreign governments with whom he has conducted diplomatic interchanges. (Photos copyright by Waldon Fawcett.)

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